

SCIENCE & EDUCATION Impact

Benefits from USDA/Land-Grant Partnership

Helping Families in Crisis

Building strong families, communities with Land-Grant expertise

Poverty, substance abuse, teen pregnancy, school failure and illiteracy are among the risk factors facing America's youth and families. They can lead to a lifetime of poverty that hurts individuals, families and communities. USDA and Land-Grant university efforts support the development of healthy, productive communities and citizens. Programs for parents and youth and links with schools and social service agencies help curb violence and substance abuse, build character and life skills and better prepare young people to succeed.

Payoff

- **Youth programs work.** Montana State research shows that youth involved in structured, out-of-school activities are less likely to participate in dangerous, anti-social behaviors and are more likely to be involved as leaders in their schools and communities. South Carolina State researchers report that 66% of pregnant teens participating in counseling, mentoring and self-development activities improve their academic performance; 80% reported positive behavioral and self-esteem changes.
- **Getting a JUMP-start.** Arizona's Project JUMP mentors girls at risk for school failure, gang membership and delinquency. Participating students are improving math and reading skills and are reducing disciplinary problems. Utah State students are partnering with retirement-age couples to mentor at-risk youth and their families through the Youth and Families with Promise program. It focuses on academics, community recreation and service, youth group involvement and the development of social and emotional assets. Participating youth skip school less (95%), have fewer problems with police (93%) and are less likely to cheat (90%) or steal (90%).
- **Engaged communities.** New Hampshire Extension's Teen Assessment Program provides community-specific baseline data regarding youth attitudes and risk behaviors. Armed with this information, communities raised more than \$600,000 to fund a teen health center, a suicide prevention program, teen recreational centers, after-school programs and other activities for more than 22,000 youth. Vermont Extension supports communities by building collaborations and developing volun-

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teen leadership. Participating communities are generating much-needed volunteer support and local funding to support creative, educational and recreational programs for youth. Similar extension community development programs can be found in **Georgia, Idaho, Maryland, Tennessee** and many other states.

- **Kids helping kids.** **Purdue** students are mentoring kids who live in public housing by helping them with homework and basic life skills. College students gain life experience while helping children improve their grades. **Georgia** 4-H community service club members are helping kids learn to read. Participants are spending more time reading, and their teachers are seeing improved literacy skills. Through a **Prairie View A&M** 4-H program, high school students in **Texas** are mentoring middle school students as part of their Teen Leadership Connection and Bike Club. As a result, the younger students are increasing school attendance, learning to work cooperatively, appreciating diversity and improving social and communication skills.
- **Keeping kids safe.** Elementary students are improving their behavior and academic performance by participating in **Wyoming** Extension's Kids Taking Care of Business. This after-school program exposes students to hands-on activities in science, computer and Internet skills, life skills training and healthy recreation. With help from **Arizona** Extension, volunteers opened a recreational center to provide safe alternatives for 1,500 youth. Youth leaders from the center are sharing their success stories with local, state and national groups. Through **Texas A&M** Extension, inner-city teens are learning about horticulture, food safety and business by growing the produce for and marketing their own brand of salsa. Participating youth are finishing high school and staying out of trouble.
- **Parent and caregiver support.** Parents and caregivers need information and support to ensure a healthy start for all children. **Kentucky, Nevada, New Mexico State** and **Wisconsin** provide science-based parenting and child development information through newsletters and publications. Responding to an **Arizona** Extension publication, one grandparent noted, "The resource notebook is wonderful and I wish there had been a resource like this when I first received custody of my grandchild eight years ago." A family resource center

established with assistance from **New Hampshire** Extension is helping incarcerated fathers become better parents. Inmates are communicating more effectively with their partners about their children and are using visitation time for more positive family interactions. Tribal Community Resource Centers established with assistance from **Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute** are training child care workers to meet the specific health and education needs of tribal communities. Nearly 60 educators in this program are earning a degree in early childhood multicultural education.

- **Resisting temptation.** **Ohio State** researchers found that drug use among urban and rural youth becomes more common the farther a teen lives from a farm. A farming-based program in **Wyoming** helps at-risk teens connect with agriculture to learn life skills such as teamwork, caring and responsibility. Youth report a sense of stability in their lives, ownership in something worthwhile and a sense of pride and accomplishment. Parents participating in **Iowa State** Extension's Strengthening Families Program are improving their skills while children are reducing substance abuse and other risky behaviors.
- **Character counts.** Character education programs taught by **Arizona, Georgia, Illinois, Louisiana State, Nebraska, North Dakota State** and many other Land-Grant universities teach youth the values of respect, trustworthiness, fairness, caring and citizenship. Improved academic performance, decreased need for disciplinary actions and better relationships at school and at home are among the results.



**Cooperative State Research, Education,
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